

June 18, 2009

Dear Camper Charlene,

I was just deleting old emails and I came across one where DA/Mike says that you're flying out to camp in Washington State on June 18 which is today. I thought it was June 17. Also, two friends, both named "Celia" (or Cecelia) are going with you and they've been to the camp before. This is nice to have friends along. Remember, I always had my twin, Patti, with me at camp except my last experience as a counselor after my first year of college. Anyway, I wonder how you keep your Celia friends straight. I picture both of their heads twirling around when you call their name(s). Maybe you call one of them #1 and the other, #2.

Of course that probably wouldn't work very well because everyone wants to be #1. In fact, your great granddad, Alan Douglas Blackledge (dad of Barbara, Patti, Penny, Mike and Pete) used to do that with his sons, Mike and Pete. Mike was born first, so Daddy often referred to him as, "my number one son". This made Pete the "number two son." Hmmmmm. How do you think that made Pete feel?

For some reason Daddy didn't "number" his girls. Maybe girls just weren't worth numbering. Horrors. When I grew up and got married and had two sons of my own (your cousins once removed: Andy and Nick), my husband Fred and I agreed that NO ONE would be number anything. It worked out very well. I hope both our sons consider themselves as #1.

You've probably heard of George Foreman, a famous boxer of yesteryear. Believe it or not, George named ALL of his SIX sons, "George." This is true. Compared to that, having two Celia's for friends probably isn't too much of a hassle after all.

I loved going to camp so much every summer that during the summer after my freshman year in college (age 18), I decided to get a job as a camp counselor for six weeks. The camp was Camp Mystic and located in Hunt, Texas. Our family was then living in Houston, Texas because our dad had retired from the Navy and was then working for Cameron Iron Works as a vice president. I went to high school and college in Houston.

My dad was very gregarious and did a lot of PR (public relations) work for Cameron.

I think both Mike/DA and Pete turned out to be gregarious, too. Anyway, I had cute campers in my cabin at Camp Mystic. The oddest thing these 10 year olds did was to write home and ask to be sent pickles. Everyone soon got jars of pickles in the mail and they began having contests in the cabin during rest hour as to who could drink the most pickle juice. Can you

imagine the UGHS, puckering and face squinching?

I was a swimming instructor at Camp Mystic. The other swim instructors were tough cookies, to say the least. Almost on a daily basis, one counselor or another would find a snake in the swimmers' water, grab it by the tail, toss it onto the bank, pick it up again by the tail, and crack it over her head like a whip until the snake was dead of a broken spine.

These same waterfront counselors told the campers, "Don't worry about the snakes in the swimming area. They're water moccasins, and a water moccasin never bites unless its head is above water so you can see it coming. Just move." Hey, I actually believed this information and to quell any fears, decided to not worry unless I saw a snake's head raised and swimming my direction. Never happened. Months later, I researched the subject at the library when I got home and discovered that the claim about snakes biting only above water was a big, fat lie.

At the end of that six weeks as a counselor at Camp Mystic, I had earned a total of \$50 (as well as my room and board). Back home in Houston, I took the entire \$50 and splurged on a pink leather jacket. It was a perfect fit, light pink in color, well made with silky lining. I loved that jacket and wore it all over the campus at Rice where I went to college. I even took it along when I got married to Fred at 22. That jacket lasted many years and probably rates as my lifelong favorite piece of attire.

Next time I'm going to concentrate my letter on the camper's favorite subject: FOOD. Until then, Hugs and lots of camper activities fun from  
GAP